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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 584  
By Winningham

A RESOLUTION To honor and commend Dr. Vernon Coffey for  
his laudable service as Commissioner of  
Education.

WHEREAS, It is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause in their deliberations to honor those estimable citizens who have wholeheartedly given of themselves in the service of our young people, dedicating their lives and careers to the education of the youth of this State; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Vernon Coffey is one such admirable citizen who is richly deserving of this legislative body's commendation; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Coffey has meritoriously served for two years as Commissioner of Education for the State of Tennessee and will be resigning August 1, 2001; and

WHEREAS, A sterling scholar, he holds a Doctorate in Education Administration and Supervision from East Tennessee State University; he also received his Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Educational Specialist and Educational Administration degree from East Tennessee State University; and

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WHEREAS, Commissioner Vernon Coffey began his illustrious career in education as a high school teacher in Rogersville, Tennessee; he was appointed Principal of Rutledge High School in Grainger County in 1978; he also served as Title I Director for Grainger County Schools; he became an Instructional Supervisor for the system in 1979 and was elected Superintendent of Schools in 1980; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Coffey left the superintendency in 1995 to become Deputy Commissioner of Education for the State of Tennessee; in April of 1996, he returned to Knoxville as Regional Director for the East Tennessee office; and

WHEREAS, After twenty-eight years of exceptional service in public education, he was appointed to the position of Commissioner of Education by Governor Don Sundquist in July, 1999; and

WHEREAS, As Commissioner, Dr. Vernon Coffey focused on accountability and improving low performing schools; during his astute tenure, he has overseen improvements to the State report card with information being provided on individual schools via the Internet; and

WHEREAS, A highly respected administrator and educator, Commissioner Coffey has served on the Board of Directors for the Tennessee Organization of School Superintendents, the Tennessee Small Schools Systems, and the Lakeway Center for the Handicapped; and

WHEREAS, He has contributed his time and considerable talents to numerous community, state, and national organizations and programs; he has been an active member of the JTPA Private Industry Council, the Superintendents Study Council, the Superintendents Task Force on High School Dropouts, the American Association of School Administrators, the Tennessee Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the Tennessee Association for School Supervision and Administration; and

WHEREAS, All his accomplishments aside, Dr. Vernon Coffey is most blessed with the love and companionship of his wife, Virginia, who recently retired from teaching at Rutledge

High School; they have two beautiful children, Gina, who is married to Mark Hipsher, and Brett, who is married to Candace, and two delightful grandchildren, Will and Marisa Hipsher; and

WHEREAS, The Coffeys have inspired their two children to pursue careers in education; their daughter, Gina Coffey Hipsher, is a second grade teacher and their son, Brett Coffey, is a fifth grade teacher in Grainger County Schools; and

WHEREAS, In his freetime, Commissioner Vernon Coffey enjoys fishing in the lake near his house; right after he bought his first boat, he tried to launch it by putting one foot on the dock for leverage and one foot on the boat; when the boat got away from him, he tumbled into the lake; he didn't drown and still keeps the boat, which is pretty good for a man who can't swim; and

WHEREAS, Throughout his tenure as Commissioner, Dr. Coffey has carried himself with the utmost decorum; his strength of character, enthusiasm, and persistence have earned him the respect and approbation of the citizens of this State; and

WHEREAS, Governor Don Sundquist has said, "He has been an important member of this administration for the past two years, and he has worked tirelessly to improve education across our state"; and

WHEREAS, Commissioner Vernon Coffey has ably guided the Department of Education since 1999, and although he will soon no longer serve as Commissioner, his imprint on the department and its curriculum and programs will indelibly remain a positive force for change and growth; and

WHEREAS, This General Assembly finds it appropriate to acknowledge and applaud Commissioner Coffey for his admirable dedication and stalwart service to the education system of this State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, That we honor Dr. Vernon Coffey for his commendable service as

Commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Education, applaud his commitment to excellence in education, and express our appreciation for all his efforts on behalf of the youth of this State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we wish Dr. Coffey much joy in his new position as Superintendent of Grainger County Schools.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.